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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant reporting and editorial coverage December 28 to President Chen Shui-bian's son-in-law, who was sentenced to six years in prison and fined NT\$30 million Wednesday for his involvement in insider trading in the Taiwan Development Company case. Coverage also focused on the trial of the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs case, and the aftermath of the strong earthquake that rocked southern Taiwan Tuesday. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an "Apple Daily" column discussed President Chen Shui-bian's current status. The article predicated that Chen will struggle between his dual roles as lawyer for the defendant and as president during the remainder of his term. End summary.

"A-Bian Comes Alive Again"

Columnist Antonio Chiang commented in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (12/28):

"... A-Bian came alive again in the wake of the Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral elections. Acting step by step and with great care, he resumed execution of his presidential authority by tossing off a plan to re-nominate the Control Yuan members and by appointing a group of two and three-star generals and admirals. His next step is to nominate the Grand Justices and the State Public Prosecutor-General, and he is likely to visit Central America and Africa early next year. It appears as if the previous glory has returned.

"When on his ebb tide, A-Bian once announced that he would relinquish some of his presidential powers. But he has made too many promises, and he may not really mean what he says sometimes. Besides, to relinquish some of his powers does not include the powers granted to him by the Constitution; he will still try his best to execute these powers as long as he remains in office. As offense and defense is currently being played out in court over the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs case, in which Chen is allegedly involved, and as the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs case as well as the declaration of assets by public officials are all duties under the purview of the Control Yuan, it may involve conflicts of interest and thus rob A-Bian of his legitimacy if he wants to nominate the Control Yuan members now. The DPP filed for constitutional interpretation from the Grand Justices over the Presidential Office Allowance for State Affairs case. But since the Grand Justices will be nominated by A-Bian, whose interests are obviously at stake, it will be very difficult to convince the public, no matter how unbiased Bian claims his position is.

"A-Bian played the role of lawyer for the defendant while fighting for his and his family's cases, but in the meantime, he played the role as the president when he delivered a speech at the Investigation Bureau, appointed senior military officers, and nominated the Control Yuan members. Still, quite a few people in

Taiwan's society regard him as a defendant and accomplice and refuse to acknowledge him as president. A-Bian still has more than one year of his remaining term of office, and he will surely struggle between his roles of lawyer and president. For him, this will be a test of will, but for Taiwan's society, it will be an unnecessary torture."

WANG